How to shift to locally led action?

A joint KUNO and ReflACTION event

Workshop Photo Report

21 & 22 May 2019

Hosted by Stichting Vluchteling in the Hague, the Netherlands

28 participants

Background

What does it take to shift international crisis response to locally led collaborative action? This was the core question in the event that brought together experienced professionals and free thinkers from different backgrounds with an interest in actively contributing to fundamental transformation of humanitarian aid.

During the event participants focussed on changing approaches to aid management and practice, and the relationship between crisis-affected people and aid actors, particularly with regard to recipients' roles in decision-making processes. The event linked the current debate in The Netherlands about the future of aid with the results of the ReflACTION community and the ideas for the path ahead.

Furthermore, with the upcoming ReflACTION Innovation Forum on locally-led crisis response in November, a major milestone of the initiative lies ahead. There was plenty to share, shape and plan for the near future as well as for the time beyond.

Programme Overview

Day 1, Tuesday 21st of May 2019

Day 1	Session title	Method
9.00	**Getting started**	Participants & programme
9.45	**Setting the scene**	Collectively exploring "From Voices to Choices" with kick-off inputs from: Mariana Merelo Lobo (IARAN), Smruti Patel (Global Mentoring Initiative) and Roland Hansen (Malteser International)
11.00	**Sensing into new humanitarian action (1)**	Local2Global: a case study by Nils Carstensen (DanChurchAid)
12.00	**Define and explore main topics (1)**	Identifying the main issues (key elements) of locally-led crisis response
13.30	**Define and explore main topics (2)**	Small groups explore in-depth core elements for change
15.45	**Sensing into new humanitarian action (2)**	Overcoming obstacles when introducing prototypes: A case study by Nils Carstensen (DanChurchAid)
16.30	**Summarize & set targets for day 2**	Plenary discussion findings small groups.
19.00	**Joint dinner**	Bij Mauce, Theresiastraat 14, Den Haag

A reminder of the local people affected by disaster who could not attend the meeting in the Hague

Day 2, Wednesday 22nd of May 2019

Day 2	Session title	Method
9.00	Getting started	
9.45	Ways forward (1)	Small groups develop concrete strategies on the pathways identified during day 1 and look into the underlying drivers and blockades.
11.30	Inspiration loop	Mini-info/discussion sessions in parallel: • PBA: Partnership Brokering Association; • Oxfam Novib: Empowering Local & National Humanitarian actors (ELNHA); • ReflACTION: Innovation Forum on locally-led crisis response and displacement.
13.30	Ways forward (2)	Findings from small groups on what should be addressed first, what could be incentives for change and how could change be initiated?
15:15	Action Planning	ReflACTION upcoming milestones (open for all). If KUNO-participants wish for their 'own' next-steps session; of course we could arrange it.
16.00	Closure	

Day 1 - From Voices to Choices by Mariana Merelo Lobo from IARAN

[Report from Voices to Choices. Expanding crisis-affected people's influence over aid decisions: An outlook to 2040](#)

People affected by crisis make decisions every day about how to use their capacities and the resources available to them to best meet their needs. However, when it comes to the aid provided by the formal humanitarian sector, crisis-affected people continue to report having extremely limited ability to influence the aid decisions that affect them. After decades of talk and commitments to put people at the center of aid, we, as a sector, continue to fall short.

Ultimately, the formal humanitarian sector knows what it "should" do; the arguments have changed little in decades. Formal sector actors know that they have a role to play in relinquishing their own control and promoting an enabling environment for crisis affected people and local actors to influence and make decisions. Humanitarian business-as-usual is changing. Formal humanitarian sector actors can choose to use this moment to focus on those being left behind: by stepping back and following the lead of crisis-affected people and local actors, co-designing interventions together with them, amplifying the power of their voices and supporting the expansion and realization of their choices. Only then will crisis-affected people finally sit at the center of aid.

Day 1 - From Voices to Choices by Mariana Merelo Lobo from IARAN

[Report from Voices to Choices. Expanding crisis-affected people's influence over aid decisions: An outlook to 2040](#)

Day 1 - Introduction by Smruti Patel from Global Mentoring Initiative, Start Fund & Start Network

Report: Localisation current situation and future directions

It is possible to differentiate between two distinct interpretations of localisation. The decentralisation interpretation addresses those problems which can be understood as arising from 'centralisation' in the humanitarian system and acknowledges the need for greater cost-effectiveness. This interpretation takes a more technical operational perspective. To the extent that it considers the issue of 'power', it does so primarily by looking at the distribution of 'power' between 'HQ' and the regional/country offices. The transformation interpretation sees 'localisation' success in terms of far stronger national capacities and leadership. They argue that the heavy footprint and attitudes of international agencies one of the important obstacles to both national leadership and the building of strong and sustained national capacities. 'Transformers' are concerned that 'localisation' as 'decentralisation' simply results in incentives to accelerate the 'multi-nationalisation' of INGOs: creating more and more 'national' offices and national 'affiliates'. The best-known localisation marker is the 25% target. However, broader inquiry, also among NNGOs, brings to the fore seven dimensions of localisation beyond just funding.

Day 1 - [Local to Global Protection](url) (L2GP) by Nils Carstensen from DanChurchAid[1]

L2GP documents and promotes local perspectives on protection, survival and recovery in major humanitarian crises. Based on research in Burma/Myanmar, the occupied Palestinian territories, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria and Zimbabwe, L2GP explores what people living in areas affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies do to survive and protect themselves. L2GP also work with developing new ways to support survivor and community-led crisis responses.

Day 1 – [People First Impact Method](url)[2]

The People First Impact Method (P-FIM) approach was developed from reflection on experience, learning from previous exercises and research. It grew out of Gerry McCarthy and Paul O'Hagan's years of experience working in international development and humanitarian assistance. Many people from hundreds of organisations in many countries have been trained to give a voice to thousands of people and to identify and attribute significant changes in their lives. The People First Impact Method (P-FIM) P-FIM can support accountability processes, assessment, evaluation, project and programme design, monitoring and evaluation, policy and strategy development.

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[1] See https://www.local2global.info/
[2] See annex for further details

Day 1 – small work groups exploring elements for change

Participants wrote issues they wished to put forward for discussion on sticky notes. These issues were grouped by overarching theme: donors, multi-stakeholder initiatives, INGOs, attitudes and Community Empowerment. Groups were formed on the basis of these themes. Community Empowerment was included in the Multi-Stakeholder group. Four issues were identified as overarching end goals.
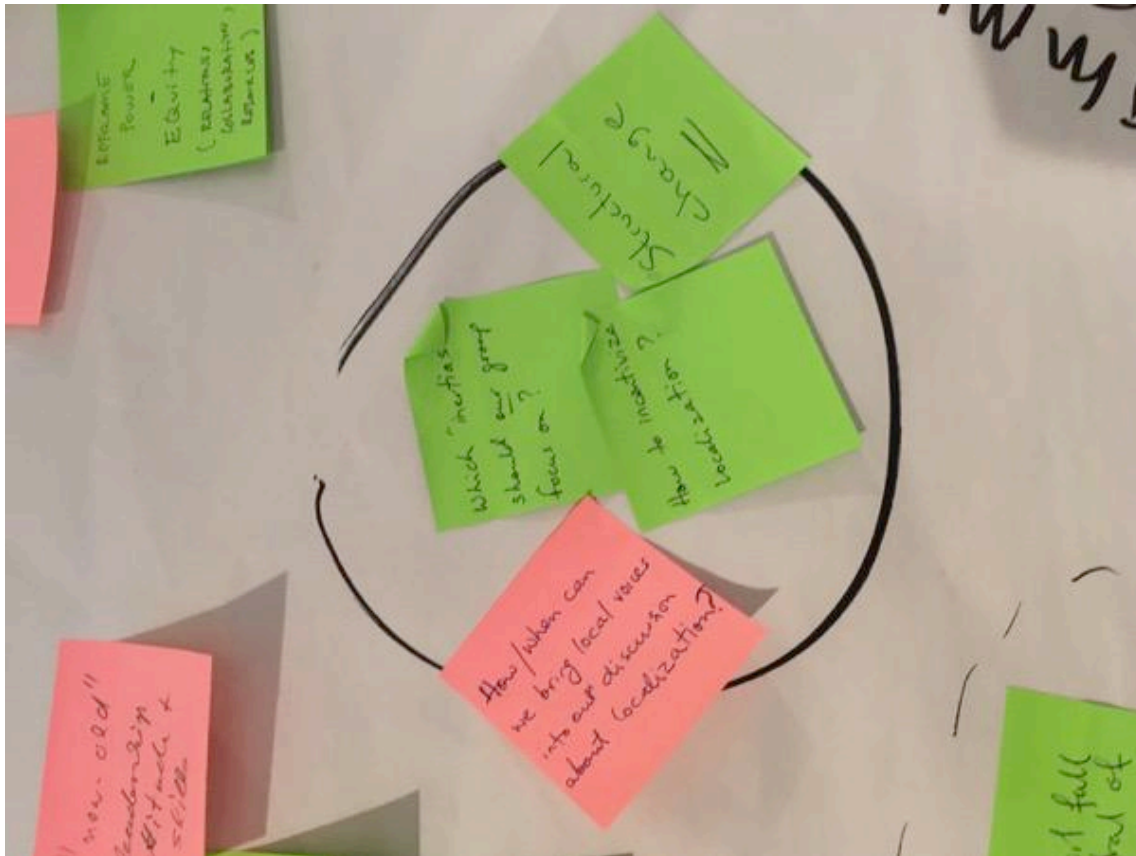
1 Overarching end goals

Elements for change related to donors

- How to foster long-term donor commitment without subcontracting?
- How to convince donors to provide unrestricted funds?
- How to convince donors of the value of community cash grants beyond UNHCR?
- How to build trust between donors, INGOs and national actors?
- How to connect local NGOs directly to donors?
- How to speed up the interactions between the local and the global at the onset of crises and during early recovery?

Elements for change related to attitudes

- How to foster genuine listening and understanding?
- How to bring about the needed changes in mindset?
- How to foster courage and an acceptance of failure (which is part of the process)?
- How to talk less (the knowledge is there) and move more slowly?

Elements for change related to INGOs

- How to enable INGOs to stop thinking about their own interests and organizational survival first?
- How should the role of INGOs concretely change? Where should it change? When should it change?
- How to make it possible for INGOs to fully support the potential of local organisations (e.g. by helping them retain their staff and enabling their capacities?)
- What cases / good practices could INGOs share to help lower risk aversion in the context of localisation (e.g. examples of creative financial accountability)?
- What cases could INGOs document and "market" that shows how they effectively took on technical roles so as to inspire those reluctant to let go of control? (So not just document what the locals did).

Elements for change related to Community Empowerment

- How to foster localization cognisant of the power differences within communities (e.g. how to avoid inadvertently exacerbating inequalities)?
- How to ensure that the principle of "do no harm" is followed in all localization initiatives?
- How to avoid pushing voices to choices onto organizations that lack this capacity but are strong in other areas (e.g. technical experts)?
- How to help INGOs flip their perspective from communities participating in INGO projects to INGOs participating in the local responses of communities?
- How to enable INGOs / UN bodies to give power away?
- How to help communities get organized, i.e. empower them?

Elements for change related to Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives

- How to foster private sector engagement?
- How to enable inclusive coordination?
- How to facilitate horizontal collaboration and collective impact?
- How to reframe the power and equity dimensions of these initiatives, i.e. in terms of relations, collaboration and resources.
- How to work effectively with state actors at different levels?
- How to ensure that initiatives are based on a good understanding of the role of governments vis a vis their citizens?
- How to address blockages by national governments?
- How to take generic cash transfers to the global level?
- How to create momentum for an alliance on localisation, leading to a resolution and an action plan?
- How to create strategic connections between demand and supply, fast and slow developments, short and long initiatives, and learning and unlearning?

Day 2 – Partnership Brokering Association

Report: Brokering Better Partnerships

The evidence is building for partnering as the leading delivery mechanism for social, economic, cultural, environmental, crisis management and conflict prevention programmes across the globe. The UN Sustainable Development Goals has even dedicated one of the 17 global goals to partnership. It is clear that single entity interventions, being too narrow in their approach and too restricted in their reach, are inadequate to tackle the complexity of many of the issues at hand. Partnering is an approach best suited to complexity. Partnerships, at their best, offer a model of working that draws on the unique and diverse competencies and expertise of different communities, organisations and sectors. They do so in ways that are intentionally designed to be inclusive, mutually beneficial and that are dedicated to building sustainable solutions.

Box 1: Ten key attributes for effective partnering

1. A **clear understanding** between the partners of the word 'partnership'
2. Agreement to a **shared vision and common purpose**
3. Account and allowance being made for **individual partners' interests**
4. The **co-creation** of design, decisions and solutions
5. Commitment to **sharing risks as well as benefits**
6. Every partner **contributes resources** (whether tangible or intangible)
7. Partners **share decision-making and leadership** responsibilities
8. Partners commit to **mutual / horizontal accountability**
9. Partners work together to develop a **principled approach** to their partnering endeavours
10. Attention is paid to the **partnering process** as well as the partnership's projects

Box 2: Professional Skills and personal attributes needed by those in partnership brokering roles:

- **Understanding** of the specific opportunities and challenges of partnering as a paradigm
- **Confidence** in holding space for difficult conversations and breakthrough ideas to emerge
- **Empathy** for different perspectives, values and constraints
- **Good judgment** about what is / is not possible
- **Facilitation & negotiation** skills that are suitably tailored for a partnership model
- **Communication** – specifically the ability to synthesise and communicate complex information
- **Coaching** and a strong commitment to building the capacity of partners to partner well
- **Balancing** imagination / vision for the partnership with the discipline / rigour needed to deliver it

Day 2 - Empowering Local and National Humanitarian Actors by Tilleke Kiewied from Oxfam Novib

Empowering Local and National Humanitarian Actors (ELNHA) is a three-year project which focuses on strengthening the role of local and national humanitarian actors (LNHAs) in disaster-affected Uganda and Bangladesh. The project aims to strengthen LNHAs capacity to lead (STRENGTH); LNHAs ability to influence the humanitarian agenda (VOICE); and for donors and INGOs to broaden the space for LNHAs to lead and influence (SPACE).

STRENGTH
LNHAs capacity to lead
- HUCOCA
- Capacity Development Plans defined by local actors
- Humanitarian Capacity Development Fund (HCDF)
- Areas of capacity development: CTP, organizational, humanitarian education, fundraising, conflict analysis, contingency planning, MEAL etc.

VOICE
LNHAs influence humanitarian agenda
- Humanitarian Grant Facility for Response (HGFR)
- Influencing and Campaign work at national level
- Influencing activities by partners: learning exercises, district exchange fora; advocacy capacity training

SPACE
donors & INGOs broaden the space
- Influencing at the global level
- Research and products on localization
- LNHAs access to national and international platforms

Day 2 – Global Mentoring Initiative by Smruti Patel Global Mentoring Initiative, Start Fund & Start Network

The approach used by the Global Mentoring Initiative is based on the idea that sustained organisational effectiveness is more dependent on the 'people-dimension' than on other aspects. What matter are mind-sets, attitudes, atmosphere, organisational 'culture' etc. Of great importance is also the habitat in which organizations live. Successful organisations therefore also need to have 'political' resources and capabilities. Organisational effectiveness is more often than not dependent on collaboration with other organised entities. 'Capacities within' need to be complemented by 'capacities between' – which has implications for the organisational culture, particular skills (partnering, collaborative leadership) and possibly even the business model. The Global Mentoring Initiative supports capacity- and organisational development by identifying / sensing where an organisation at that moment is at, and designing a process to take it to the next level. It helps organizations assess how they can make their collective, global, or 'system-wide' capacity better prepared to respond to a crisis in ways that maximise the participation of affected populations and reinforce rather than replace local and national capacities. It helps organizations assess questions such as

- What will make our own organisation better prepared to do this?
- What strategic decisions for a particular crisis response, will create enabling conditions for this?
- What does localisation mean for our individual (and collective) operational practices?

Day 2 – Small Group Discussions on the Way Forward

Small groups were formed to discuss the way forward, focussing on specific issues. One group focused on developing a strategic framework for localisation. Another looked at the next steps the ReflACTION initiative will take. A third looked at drivers and inertia in funding for localisation.

Strategic Framework for Localisation

The group will develop a strategic framework for localisation and present this at the meeting in Kampala. The framework will be modular and content driven. It will be a basis for proposal development.


Drivers and Barriers to funding for localisation by Peter Heinze from KUNO

Many of the drivers and barriers of localisation are linked to funding. This group discussed the actor based and systemic issues that influence this issue, such as trust and accountability. Next steps that were identified include reviewing existing research on funding localisation.
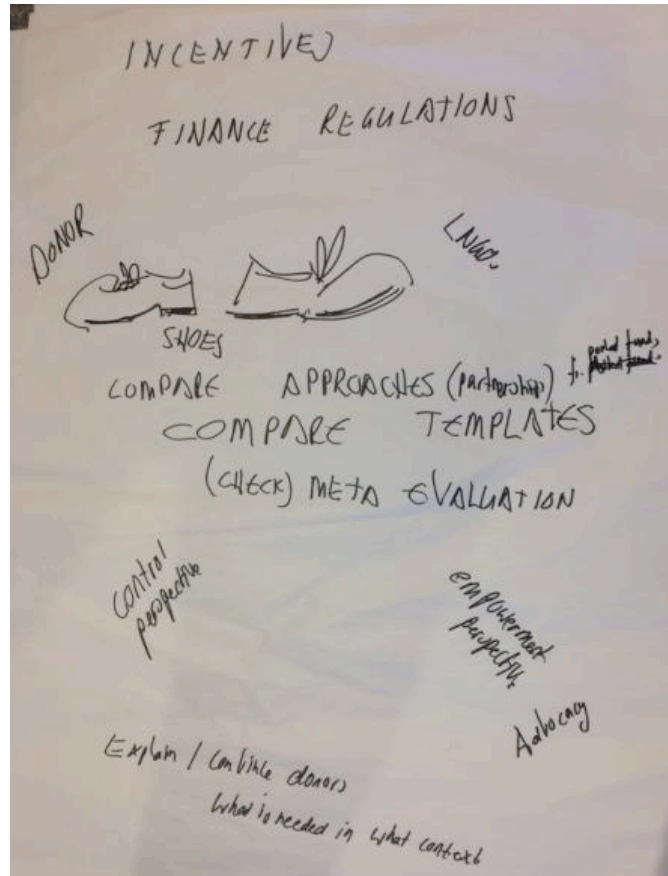
ReflACTION Next Steps by Ralf Otto from ReflACTION

ReflACTION calls for a truly collaborative response to crisis. It holds that crisis affected people have capacities to respond to crises and that aid agencies need to start emphasizing those by actually listening and by taking decisions and acting collaboratively. Its aim to help aid agencies let go of control over humanitarian aid. Since the initiative was launched in 2017, 12 meetings have taken place. The next major event has been planned for November 2019 in Kampala. The next steps that were discussed, include the next European meeting, the roadmap, how to become more inclusive and the use of the online Linkando platform.
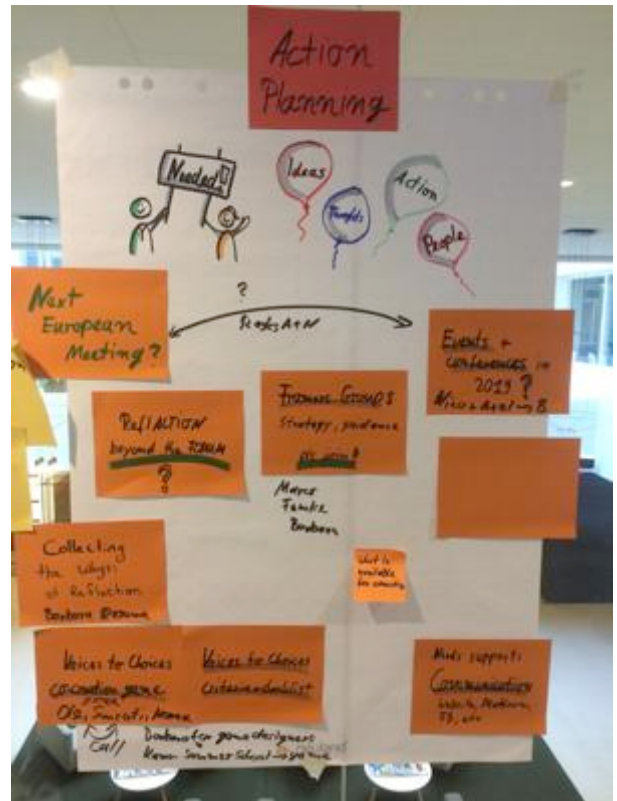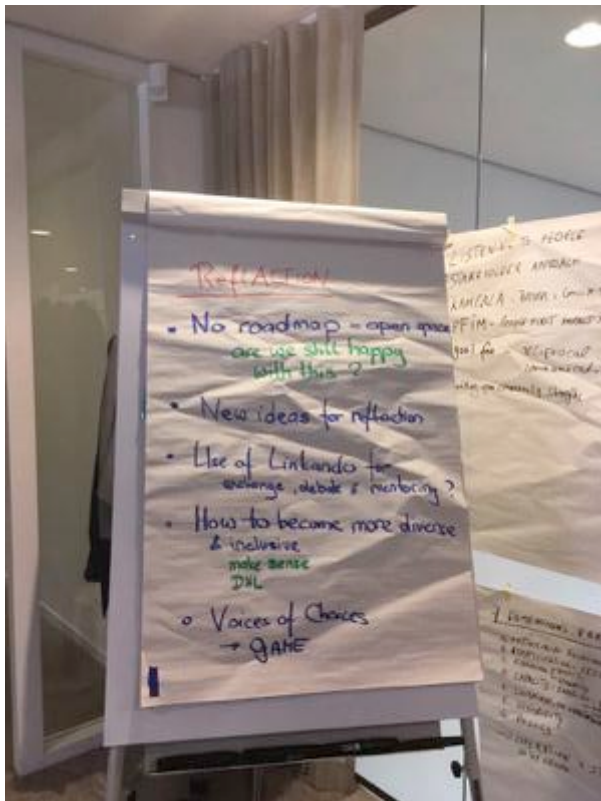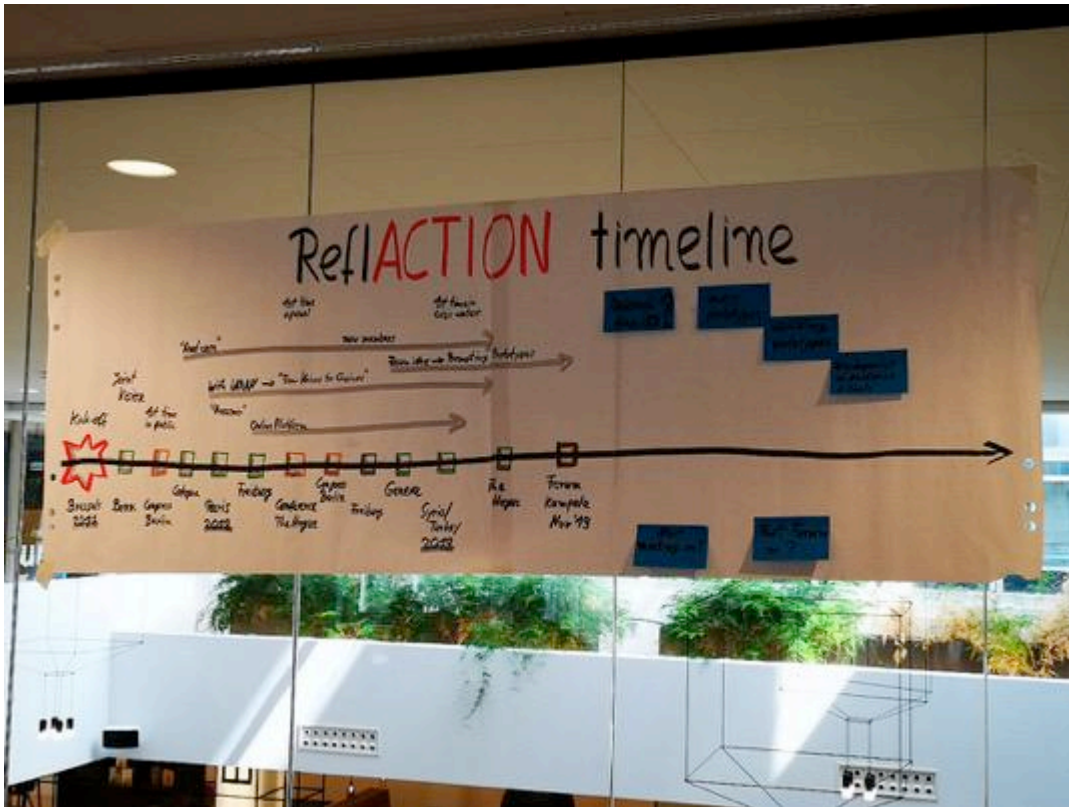
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Annex Introduction to P-FIM

Introduction

The overall objective is to give communities a voice, to identify and to attribute impact in order to improve our work. Together we will identify and select the groups and places that we feel are fully representative of the community in order to meet this objective.

We want to know whether we are doing the right things and doing things right. The community will tell us. How we communicate and engage with communities is as important as the work we do. This process will increase our awareness and responsibility for the quality of support we provide and build community ownership for the positive changes that we all want to see. Over the next 4 or 5 days we will learn from each other and especially from the community. We will improve our personal awareness and communication skills and work as one team from different organisations.

Giving Communities a Voice

We want to hear the community voice and understand the context of their lives from their perspective – not our own voices or our agency perspective.

Impact

We will listen to the changes that people feel are taking place in their lives. These are positive, negative and neutral. We want to hear about their reality and understand their context.

Identifying Impact

We will record the most important things happening in peoples' lives.

Attributing Impact

Based on what community groups tell us we will learn about the causes and impact of these changes and whether they are positive, negative or neutral (a neutral impact is where an event or action was both positive and negative resulting in a neutral effect).

Schedule

The first 2 days will be focussed on learning, training and personal development. This will be practical, participatory and fun! We will share experience, discuss, read and role-play in an enjoyable atmosphere. There will be time for group work, individual reflection and feedback. You will be trained to carry out field work in teams of 3 as facilitators, reporters and observers. Each team will work with one community group. Tomorrow we will decide together on who will be in each team and with which group. You don't need to take any notes – we will learn by experiencing, doing and reflection. Handouts for the sessions will be given at the end of each module or each day.

First Field Visit – Goal-Free Community Discussion

Transportation will be provided on the morning of day 3 to take you to your community group arranged by the organising agency. Each discussion should take between 2 to 3 hours. This discussion will be goal-free i.e. a discussion that is led by the community group. Lunch will be ready on return. On arrival, each team will work together to capture the group discussion in a standard format provided. It is important that all team members are present to complete the feedback.

1. Goal-Free Report Presentations

On the morning of day four each group will be given 15 minutes to present their findings in plenary. One team member can do this. This will be followed by 10 minutes for clarifications and questions from the whole team. In the afternoon we will prepare for the next morning's field work. Note that presentations and preparation for two-way community discussion will be completed on the afternoon of day 3 if the exercise is completed over 4 days.

Second Field Visit – Two-Way Community Discussion

Transport will be provided. Each discussion should take between 1.5 to 2 hours. This will be a two- way discussion with the same teams meeting the same groups. Two-way discussion comprises the main issues arising from the goal-free discussion along with issues that agencies would like the community to discuss. On return your team will work together and capture the group discussion on using the template provided. All team members need to be present. Lunch will be provided.

Two-Way Report Presentations

In the afternoon following the two-way discussion each group will present their findings.

This will include brief clarification questions.

After all presentations are complete, an evaluation will be completed followed by presentation of participation certificates.

The findings from the community will be consolidated by the facilitator and form the basis of a report. The community voice will be more widely heard. The learning will be used to inform evidence based advocacy, policies, strategies and programmes.

Background to P-FIM

This approach developed from reflection on experience, learning from previous exercises and research. Many people from hundreds of organisations in many countries have been trained to give a voice to thousands of people and to identify and attribute significant changes in their lives. The People First Impact Method (P-FIM) grew out of Gerry McCarthy and Paul O'Hagan's years of experience working in international development and humanitarian assistance. P-FIM can support accountability processes, assessment, evaluation, project and programme design, monitoring and evaluation, policy and strategy development.